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POSTAL NEWS

Contact: Sue Brennan
202.285.9433

Sue.Brennan@usps.gov

Local Contact: Susan Wright
502.416.2119

Susan.W.Wright@usps.gov



Postal Service Pays Tribute to Bluegrass Music *New postage stamp dedicated at Bluegrass Hall of Fame*

OWENSBORO, KY — That high lonesome sound was celebrated here today with the dedication of the Bluegrass Forever stamp at the Bluegrass Hall of Fame and Museum.

Bluegrass is a singularly American music style, born in the mid-20th century. It defies time, drawing inspiration from the past while also openly embracing innovation.

“Like Bluegrass, the Postal Service finds inspiration in our nation’s history — which is why we are so proud of the role we play in portraying the American experience,” said Steven W. Monteith, Postal Service chief customer and marketing officer and executive vice president. “Bluegrass music is a legacy that can make us all proud, whether we’re a musician or a fan. And it is a legacy we are proud to recognize with this stamp.”

The genre blends old-time folk and fiddle music with elements of blues, jazz, country and gospel. The signature sound of bluegrass relies on tight vocal harmonies, driving tempos, and perhaps most of all, outstanding musicianship.

“I am very pleased and excited that the U.S. Postal Service is issuing a commemorative stamp for our beloved bluegrass music,” said Ricky Skaggs, 15-time Grammy® Award-winner and bluegrass ambassador. “Millions of people around the world will see this stamp and many of them will want to know more about the music. A huge door has opened up to us!”

The stamp dedication event occurred before a concert by Skaggs.

The signature sound of bluegrass relies on a mix of acoustic string instruments. The five-string banjo dominates and, along with guitar, mandolin, and bass, sets the rhythmic foundation of this often fast-paced music. Fiddle, mandolin, banjo, and guitar evoke a range of melodic flavors and emotions in their solos and backup.

Music historians generally agree that bluegrass as we know it originated with Bill Monroe (1911–1996). Drawing on old-time fiddle and church music as well as gospel, blues and jazz, Monroe fashioned a style that was both brand new and achingly familiar.

By 1945, Monroe and his band, the Blue Grass Boys, had solidified the key components of bluegrass: refined vocal harmonies, driving tempos, and outstanding musicianship. Once viewed as a type of country music, bluegrass — famously described as “folk music in overdrive” by musicologist Alan Lomax — emerged as its own distinct genre and could be found just about everywhere, from college campuses and large urban areas to television shows and movies.

Stamp Design

Inspired by vintage bluegrass concert posters, the stamp art features four acoustic string instruments typical of bluegrass bands — guitar, five-string banjo, fiddle, and mandolin — below the word “Bluegrass.” Text at the top of the stamp reads “High Lonesome Sound,” the title of a 1963 documentary about Appalachian folk music and a familiar nickname for bluegrass.

Antonio Alcalá, an art director with the Postal Service, worked with designer and illustrator Heather Moulder to produce the stamp art. Moulder created the design as a letterpress print, with each layer carved by hand from wood and linoleum.

Postal Products

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